United Nations A/52/PV.76

# General Assembly
Fifty-second Session

*Official Records*

**76**th plenary meeting
Thursday, 18 December 1997, 10 a.m.
New York

*President:* Mr. Udovenko ..... (Ukraine)

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Enkhsaikhan (Mongolia), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.*

**Agenda item 41** *(continued)*

**Assistance in mine clearance**

**Report of the Secretary-General (A/52/679)**

**Draft resolution (A/52/L.69)**

**Mr. Hahm** (Republic of Korea): My delegation first wishes to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive and informative report on Assistance in mine clearance [A/52/679], which covers the mine-clearance activities being undertaken by the organizations of the United Nations system and presents a direction for our future work in mine clearance.

A shocking 110 million mines scattered in some 70 countries, mostly developing countries, inflict about 30,000 casualties every year. Every hour of every day, a person somewhere is killed by a landmine. Ten thousand are killed and twice as many injured every single year. These hidden killers not only inflict great suffering and death upon innocent civilians, especially children and women, but also pose a tremendous obstacle to the economic and social development and reconstruction of affected regions. In addition, they paralyse peacekeeping operations and humanitarian relief activities and inhibit the repatriation of refugees and internally displaced persons. In order to address this multifaceted problem effectively, my delegation believes that the international community has to increase the resources devoted to mine-clearance activities.

In this regard, the Korean delegation notes with satisfaction that the international community has continued to support humanitarian mine-clearance activities. For example, the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance, launched by the Secretary-General in 1994, has become a principal mechanism for financing activities related to mine clearance. My delegation is further pleased to note that, as of 1 November 1997, more than $41 million had been contributed and pledged to the Fund.

As the Secretary-General's report indicates, the United Nations system has developed a framework for coordinated action in the cause of mine clearance that involves national Governments, non-governmental organizations and the international community as a whole. Of all the United Nations bodies involved in mine clearance, until now the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) have played the most central role in working out and implementing mine clearance programmes. They have done this both through close coordination of their own activities and by coordinating with other humanitarian agencies and non-governmental organizations.

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My delegation notes that as a result of the Secretary-General's initiative for reform of the United Nations, the responsibility for all demining-related activities has been transferred to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, together with the responsibility for the management of the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance. We fully believe that DPKO will be able to carry out these new tasks successfully.

We also attach importance to the enhanced ability of the United Nations to respond rapidly to mine-related contingencies. In this regard, we support further strengthening the Organization's demining standby capacity so that field operations can be initiated without delays that could lead to needless civilian casualties.

The ultimate goal of mine-action programmes is to turn full responsibility over to national staff by building an indigenous mine-clearing capacity. Any United Nations mine-action country programme should therefore be developed and implemented with that end in mind. At the same time, the mine-affected countries also need to do all they can to acquire and apply the mine-clearance know-how provided by international organs and experts, so that they can learn to help themselves.

Let me now turn to the issue of the total elimination of anti-personnel landmines, a topic which has gained acute prominence with the recent culmination of the Ottawa process. My Government, as is well known, is not at this time able to join in the Ottawa process because of the unique security situation faced by my country on the Korean peninsula. It is no secret that the narrow band of territory around the Demilitarized Zone is one of the most heavily mined places on earth. The mines we have in place there are essential to our national security. However, they are confined to a small, marked and monitored area that is at a safe remove from any civilian population and are under constant, careful supervision.

Within that context, however, the Government of the Republic of Korea is committed to supporting the efforts of the international community to eliminate the tragic human cost of landmines. We share the deep concern of the international community over this awful scourge, and we are manifesting that concern in two major ways.

First of all, the Korean Government has in place a voluntary moratorium on the export of anti-personnel landmines. Recently, that moratorium was extended for an indefinite period. In addition, we are now making the necessary preparations to accede to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, including its amended Protocol II. Secondly, the Korean Government has been and will continue to be a contributor to the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance.

In these two ways, the Korean Government will continue to contribute to the efforts of the international community to promote demining activities and end the needless suffering of innocents as a result of these weapons.

In closing, I would like to reiterate the view of my delegation that the United Nations should continue to play the central role in the global response to the landmine problem, guiding the international community in its efforts to find a comprehensive solution. Finally, let me express our appreciation for the courage and dedication of all personnel involved in mine clearance activities, including those from the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and other international organizations.

**Mr. Elsiddig** (Sudan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The delegation of Sudan has carefully read the report of the Secretary-General on assistance in mine clearance contained in document A/52/679.

We would like to take this opportunity to commend the activities of the organizations of the United Nations system and other bodies and organizations involved in demining. We call for more cooperation and coordination between them, and we wish the Department of Peacekeeping Operations every success in shouldering the responsibilities relating to demining and the management of the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance that have been transferred to it from the Department of Humanitarian Affairs.

The signing of the Ottawa Convention on banning landmines clearly reflects the will and determination of both the official sectors and the public sectors of the international community to put an end to this crisis which faces humanity because of landmines. We once again congratulate the Canadian Government for this achievement. Sudan has signed the Ottawa agreement on banning landmines because it is aware of its international responsibility and of the humanitarian, social and economic problems of great impact resulting from landmines. Sudan at an early stage has joined all international efforts to eliminate mines.

As we all know, the issue of landmines is highly complex and there is no definitive quick fix for the problem. Despite the signing of the agreement, which we consider a great achievement, we still have a long and arduous road ahead. The mines in place all over the world must be cleared, their victims must be assisted and those injured must be rehabilitated.

It is no secret that this represents a heavy burden on affected countries owing to the magnitude of the task, the scarcity of resources and the paucity of technical equipment, above and beyond geographic and other natural impediments. We therefore appeal from this rostrum for merging our efforts at the Government and organizational level, both inter-State and voluntary, to galvanize our will and generate our energies, both official and at the mass level, in order to provide material and technical resources to implement practical and well-considered programmes to achieve this end.

The Government of the Sudan has drawn up a comprehensive programme to address this problem in all its humanitarian, social and environmental dimensions. Within a framework of integrating our efforts, a National Committee on Demining has been set up, comprised of both Government bodies and non-governmental organizations relevant to this question. Its tasks are threefold: one, to enhance citizen awareness of the risks of mines and to protect the population from their dangers; two, to undertake demining projects, including comprehensive surveys to demarcate mined areas and to train young people and students in demining activities; and three, assistance to victims and the disabled and their rehabilitation, psychologically and socially. Here, we salute the efforts being made by the International Committee of the Red Cross, which helped us set up a factory to make artificial limbs at Khartoum for rehabilitation of the disabled.

In conclusion, the delegation of Sudan would like to take this opportunity to commend the Secretariat's Department of Humanitarian Affairs, which sent a mission to evaluate the mine problem in the Sudan. Sudan looks forward to greater cooperation with all competent authorities in the United Nations system and to their assistance in all possible ways for the implementation of the national demining programme in the Sudan.

**Miss Patterson** (Australia): Australia is determined to achieve a comprehensive and lasting solution to the global landmines crisis. At the beginning of December we were one of more than 120 countries that signed the Ottawa Convention on banning landmines. Three countries have already ratified it. This gives us cause for hope. By signing the treaty, a large majority of the international community has entered into a legally binding commitment forswearing the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines. This is an achievement of major international significance.

Australia attaches great importance to finding concrete ways to universalize the treaty. For this reason, we will continue to engage the countries concerned in the Conference on Disarmament and at meetings of parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

The Ottawa treaty is not the end of the battle. A signature on paper, while important, goes only part of the way in dealing with the immediate threat posed by the millions of landmines currently in the ground or those which, regrettably, will be laid in the future. It is our support for programmes which remove, reduce or ameliorate the threat of landmines which gives the most immediate, substantial and practical effect to Australia's commitment to rid the world of landmines.

Support for demining programmes straddles the boundary between relief and development. Demining saves lives and prevents suffering. But demining also provides an important precondition for rebuilding livelihoods. It has been estimated that without landmines, agriculture production would increase by 88 to 200 per cent in different parts of Afghanistan, 11 per cent in Bosnia, 135 per cent in Cambodia, and 3.6 per cent in Mozambique. At the micro level, it has been estimated that households with a mine victim as a member are 40 per cent more likely to experience difficulty in providing sufficient food for the family.

The largest part of Australia's assistance to mine-action programmes is for direct mine-clearance activities. This includes support for surveys and clearance using detectors, sniffer dogs and, to a limited degree, mechanical clearing devices. In recognition of the long-term nature of the landmine problem, Australia also provides substantial support for mine-awareness activities. This assistance aims to reduce the risk to people who, out of necessity, continue to live in mined areas. We have also been active in providing assistance for the treatment and rehabilitation of mine-accident victims. In addition to directly mine-related assistance, Australia has provided and will continue to provide assistance to address some of the broader problems associated with the presence of landmines. Countries such

as Cambodia and Mozambique are major recipients of Australian food aid, which is required partly as a result of arable land being heavily mined.

Australia's demining assistance is focused on five of the countries most heavily infested with mines and unexploded ordnance: Cambodia, Laos, Afghanistan, Angola and Mozambique. Australia is the largest donor to the Cambodian demining program. In Laos, we are the third-largest donor. Our support for mine-action programmes is not only in the form of financial assistance; our military has provided technical assistance to a number of countries. For example, Australian military advisers were instrumental in establishing the mine-action programme in Afghanistan.

The ultimate aim of Australia's demining assistance is to build local capacity in affected countries to implement and sustain demining programmes. This is, I believe, a goal shared by everybody. It requires a long-term commitment, because landmines are a long-term problem for many countries and because many of the heavily mine-affected States have been weakened institutionally and financially by years of conflict. In this context, the sustainability of our assistance is realized through support for both institutional and technical development within counterpart organizations, initial support for recurrent costs, provision of technology and careful use of long-term technical assistance. It is gratifying to note the progress made by the demining programmes in countries such as Cambodia and Afghanistan towards this goal of sustainability.

Sustainability of mine-action programmes requires effective approaches to building human capital in demining programmes. Foreign technical inputs are often crucial in the formative stages. But it is vital that processes are put in place, from the earliest stages, to build and empower local organizations to manage their own demining programmes as soon as possible.

In the area of mine awareness, lessons need to be learned regarding the best ways to increase knowledge about mines in affected communities. Particular focus needs to be given to the best way to reach the most vulnerable groups in communities in danger.

Finally, we must work collectively to ensure that the fast-expanding pool of demining resources is coordinated in a way which maximizes its impact in the field. Above all, we owe it to past and future victims of landmines not to allow the current swelling in donor funds to make us complacent about the task ahead. Nor should we be distracted from the basic principles of good aid, in which the key to success is coordination, both globally and at the country level. The United Nations has proven itself over time best placed to undertake this coordinating role. We should ensure that it receives the support necessary to enable it to continue to do so. The current world focus on the landmines problem presents — I believe, and my country believes — the best opportunity the world has to put in place long-term solutions for sustainable development. We must not allow insufficient coordination, much less donor competition, to waste this opportunity.

It is Australia's hope that, in the search for better demining outcomes and the flush of new donor funds, these important elements of effective demining programs are not overlooked.

Clearly, a major focus for the future of demining must be the development of new technologies that make demining faster and safer. An awareness of the appropriateness of any new technology on the ground must be central to the search for better mine-detection and clearance techniques. The capacity of resource-poor local institutions to use and sustain any new technology must be gauged. Australian companies are at the forefront of this research, and I am proud to note that a new form of mine detector developed in Australia is already in use in Cambodia.

In conclusion, Australia is contributing more than we ever have to global mine clearance. Our efforts will continue to be guided by our determination to maximize the practical impact of our contributions. We will continue to scrutinize programmes to ensure their appropriateness, their effectiveness in reaching those most in need and their progress in building local capacity. And we will work hard to ensure that our inputs complement and reinforce, rather than cut across, the efforts of others on the ground. In Ottawa, our Foreign Minister announced that Australia anticipated providing 100 million Australian dollars for mine-clearance and victim-rehabilitation assistance over the period 1995-2005. This we do willingly, though we do regard it as our duty, in common with that of other countries wanting to see an end to this tragedy forever.

**Ms. Coelho Da Cruz** (Angola): As one of the most mined countries in the world, Angola shares the deep concern of the international community with respect to the use of anti-personnel landmines, taking into account

not only the loss of innocent civilians but also the obstacle landmines present to reconstruction, development and freedom of movement during the post-conflict peace-building process.

Angola, therefore, is among the 122 States which signed in Ottawa the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. The Convention will be an instrument in the joint efforts to end the suffering caused by anti-personnel mines.

We wish to emphasize the role of the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations in the field of mine clearance, namely in the context of defining policies and priorities as well as in operational and coordination activities.

We would like also to commend the important role played by the non-governmental organizations. However, as a recipient country, my Government is concerned about the reduction of contributions each year to the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance, which was set up to support demining programmes. We would like to appeal to the international community to continue its support to the Fund and to create additional new resources for this noble cause.

The lack of improved mine-detection and mine-clearance technology is critical. If we want to prevent or reduce the tragedy of landmines and promote reconstruction and development in mine-infested countries, new technology should be developed to expedite mine-clearance activities and increase their effectiveness.

According to United Nations statistics, 1.5 per cent of the population has been injured in mine or unexploded ordinance (UXO) incidents, and there are 70,000 amputees in Angola. Demining operations were carried out in 1991 along major roads, though some are still mined. As the report recognizes, Angola has limited capacities to address the enormity of the mine problem affecting the country.

We sincerely hope that the joint project document signed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Government of Angola for a two-year United Nations programme for Angola to support the development of the National Institute for the Removal of Explosive Devices will succeed for the benefit of the vulnerable populations. We would like to pay tribute to all the Governments and non-governmental organizations for their contributions to the Trust Fund for Demining Activities in Angola and for their assistance in mine-related activities.

It is encouraging to note that efforts in mine-action programmes by the United Nations, individual countries and non-governmental organizations have been intensified. Moreover, governmental and non-governmental organizations have launched a campaign to provide resources and technology for mine clearance, and a number of international conferences have been held to examine ways and means to tackle this problem effectively. More needs to be done both within the United Nations system and the international community at large.

The international community should join hands in helping mine-infested countries develop the national capacity to manage and execute comprehensive programmes for the rehabilitation of victims of landmines and their full participation in society, as called for in the General Assembly resolution 51/149.

Draft resolution A/52/L.69 reflects the concern felt by the Member States on this important issue and stresses the need for coordinated efforts by the international community. My delegation is honoured to join the list of sponsors of the draft resolution and hopes it will be adopted without a vote.

**The Acting President:** We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/52/L.69.

I should like to announce that since the introduction of the draft resolution the following countries have become co-sponsors: Bulgaria, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cyprus, El Salvador, Kazakhstan and South Africa.

The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/52/L.69?

*Draft resolution A/52/L.69 was adopted* (resolution 52/173).

**The Acting President:** Before calling the first speaker in explanation of vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

**Ms. Wang** (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): As before, the Chinese delegation has joined the consensus on the resolution on "Assistance in mine clearance". China supports the main thrust of the resolution and is in favour of this humanitarian effort of the international community aimed at preventing casualties among innocent civilians caused by the indiscriminate use of landmines.

Over the years, it has conducted fruitful work both in mine-sweeping operations inside the country and in international assistance in mine clearance. In the future, China will continue to participate actively in international efforts in mine clearance and will contribute to the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance. We are also ready to assist countries with landmine problems in the areas of mine clearance, related training, technology and equipment.

We have noted that some countries have concluded and signed the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. China respects the sovereign choice made by those countries and understands their humanitarian aspirations and concerns. We are of the view, however, that the issue of security is of itself a humanitarian concern. The general principle guiding the approach to the landmine problem should take balanced account both of humanitarian concerns and of the legitimate military needs of sovereign States for self-defence.

China supports appropriate and reasonable restrictions on mines, especially anti-personnel landmines, but countries differ in their national conditions and defence needs. For many countries, especially those lacking advanced defensive weapons, anti-personnel landmines remain an effective means of self-defence while they seek alternative means. In the context of any ban on anti-personnel landmines, we should also abide by the principle of upholding the right to national security.

**Mr. Núñez-Mosquera** (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I wish briefly to explain my delegation's position on resolution 52/173, just adopted.

Cuba attaches great importance to the item on assistance in mine clearance, and in this respect has supported the adoption of the resolutions that have been submitted to the General Assembly on this question since 1993.

Assistance in mine clearance requires urgent and energetic promotion. We hope that the unanimous support given to the resolution that we have adopted will translate in practice into a substantial increase in such assistance, particularly on the part of those countries with greater resources for such activity.

Moreover, the humanitarian concerns that we all share must not divert the attention that should be paid to the questions of national security associated with the issue of mines. Any truly effective and universally acceptable solution to the problem of mines must ensure an adequate balance between the humanitarian dimension and the legitimate right to self-defence enjoyed by States under the United Nations Charter.

I wish to take this opportunity to reiterate Cuba's readiness to contribute trained personnel to operations undertaken for strictly humanitarian purposes in States where such activities are needed, and to offer assistance to mine victims from other countries.

**The Acting President:** May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 41?

*It was so decided.*

**Agenda item 51**

**Declaration of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity on the aerial and naval military attack against the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya by the present United States Administration in April 1986**

**The Acting President:** It is my understanding that, after the necessary consultations, consideration of this item may be deferred to the fifty-third session of the General Assembly.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to defer consideration of the item and to include it in the provisional agenda of the fifty-third session?

*It was so decided.*

**The Acting President:** This concludes our consideration of agenda item 51.

**Agenda item 52**

**Armed Israeli aggression against the Iraqi nuclear installations and its grave consequences for the established international system concerning the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and international peace and security**

**The Acting President:** It is my understanding that it would be desirable to defer consideration of this item to the fifty-third session of the General Assembly.

May I therefore take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to defer consideration of the item and to include it in the provisional agenda of the fifty-third session?

*It was so decided.*

**The Acting President:** This concludes our consideration of agenda item 52.

**Agenda item 53**

**Consequences of the Iraqi occupation of and aggression against Kuwait**

**The Acting President:** It is my understanding that it would be desirable to defer consideration of this item to the fifty-third session of the General Assembly.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to defer consideration of the item and to include it in the provisional agenda of the fifty-third session?

*It was so decided.*

**The Acting President:** This concludes our consideration of agenda item 53.

**Agenda item 54**

**Implementation of the resolutions of the United Nations**

**The Acting President:** It is my understanding that there is no request to consider this item at the present session.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to defer consideration of this item to the fifty-third session and to include the item in the provisional agenda of the fifty-third session?

*It was so decided.*

**The Acting President:** This concludes our consideration of agenda item 54.

**Agenda item 56**

**Launching of global negotiations on international economic cooperation for development**

**The Acting President:** May I take it that it is the Assembly's wish to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the provisional agenda of the fifty-third session?

*It was so decided.*

**The Acting President:** This concludes our consideration of agenda item 56.

**Agenda item 55**

**Question of the Comorian Island of Mayotte**

**Mr. Mzimba** (Comoros) (*interpretation from French*): On behalf of the people of the archipelago of the Comoros and of President Mohamed Taki Abdoulkarim, I thank the General Assembly for the importance it attaches to the problems of my country.

At a time when the question of the Comorian island of Mayotte is again being considered by the General Assembly of our Organization, an inter-Comorian conference has recently concluded in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity and the international community. This conference, which was held in the hopes of finding a satisfactory outcome to the socio-political crisis that has beset my country for six months in the wake of separatist trends, had a dual objective. On the one hand, it was intended to enable people of the Comoros, of all leanings and sensibilities alike, to take stock of their post-colonial history — a history marked by multifaceted tragedies — in a frank and calm debate with the assistance of the international community. On the one hand — and thanks to the praiseworthy support of the Organization of African Unity, the League of Arab States, the French Republic and the assistance of the international community — its goal was to lay the foundations for the reconstruction of a country that has for so long been buffeted by numerous acts of external aggression that have engendered enormous economic and financial

difficulties that have significantly hampered its development.

I will not dwell on the initial results achieved at that conference in Addis Ababa, which, although they were not definitive, nevertheless opened up promising prospects. However, I will go into the various parameters which explain the reasons for the underdevelopment of the Comorian archipelago, which has fallen easy prey to mercenaries and adventurers.

The question of the Comorian island of Mayotte has been inscribed permanently on the agenda of the General Assembly since its thirty-first session. Twenty-one years later, you will note as we do that this question, which continues to preoccupy the Government and the people of Comoros to the utmost degree, has not made one iota of progress. All Comorian Governments have always remained open to any constructive dialogue which would lead to a peaceful settlement of this regrettable dispute that has put us in opposition to France. It is in this spirit of openness and dialogue that the Comorian party has chosen to give preference to the bilateral-negotiations track on this issue.

The pace with which developments have taken place has prompted us today to adopt and give preference to a spirit of openness and moderation. It is necessary to divorce passion from this debate and to compel that destiny which eluded us 22 years ago to return to its proper path and enable the four islands which make up the Comorian archipelago to set their sights with regard to peace, liberty and fraternity towards the same horizon at the dawn of the third millennium.

France, friend and preferred partner of our country, currently holds in its hands this part of the destiny which we are missing and has a decisive role to play in the definitive solution of this dispute. In order to do so it would be advisable to approach this problem from a point of view other than a pessimistic one and give impetus to a new approach which is more realistic and pragmatic.

Indeed, how could we not see the need to tap the potential, the wealth and the natural beauty of this archipelago by putting them to work for the country's socio-economic development? Bringing this about would have the dual effect of mitigating the consequences of partition, on the one hand, and enhancing the chances for reunification — something which is necessary for us — on the other.

At a time when Comorians of all political leanings and sensibilities are engaged in a true debate of ideas and in-depth consideration with a view to laying the foundations of a State that would meet the requirements of our time, the question of the Comorian island of Mayotte must not be overlooked. This question has a proper place within this new dynamic, propelled by the "bottom", from which a large consensus is emerging.

The Government and the people of the Comoros remain convinced that the long-standing ties of friendship and cooperation which bind the great nation of France — the homeland of human rights and one of the most beautiful examples of modern democracy — constitute a true guarantee for beginning constructive talks aimed at finally finding a just and lasting solution. We therefore invite our French friends to understand us and to allay our fears. Arriving at a solution between our two parties on the dispute over the Comorian island of Mayotte will be a deciding factor in good Franco-Comorian relations in the future.

This is why I would like to make from this rostrum a solemn appeal in the name of friendship and human dignity to the international community that it spare no effort in assisting the Comorian archipelago to regain its unity and territorial integrity. In the same context, international solidarity towards the Federal Islamic Republic of the Comoros is indispensable to re-start its socio-economic development and to ensure peace and security in that sub-region of the world.

In this connection, my delegation and I would like to obtain the active support of the members of our General Assembly for the speedy implementation of resolution 51/30 F of 13 December 1996, adopted during the fifty-first session, to extend special emergency economic assistance to the Comoros. This resolution, which was adopted unanimously by our Organization, is justified by the unprecedented socio-economic crisis that has beset my country for a number of years and which has been marked by the destruction of State infrastructures during the course of the last in a series of incursions by mercenaries, on 28 September 1995.

You can well see that the problems confronting the Comoros are numerous and worsening daily. However, if the development of the Comoros is compromised today, the greatest handicap continues to be in large part the absence of a sustained economic and financial programme, as well as the rigid measures advocated by the Bretton Woods institutions. Indeed, if the justification

for these measures is the poor management of public affairs by successive Comorian Governments well before the democratic election of Mr. Mohamed Taki Abdoulkarim, then it is no less than 95 per cent of the Comorian population who are the main victims.

It is in the context of rekindling the hope of the Comorian people that I ask the international community to help us make our case to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund for the adoption of a programme of budgetary assistance for the Federal Islamic Republic of the Comoros and to plead for a relaxation of the measures in the structural readjustment plan for our country.

We remain convinced that the prospects for bringing about the speedy and peaceful reunification of our country lie in a Federal Islamic Republic of the Comoros which is stable and prosperous. In order to achieve this goal my delegation and I propose the establishment of a tripartite commission comprised of France, the Comoros and the United Nations. Its mission would be to find ways and means conducive to bringing about a satisfactory outcome to the question of the Comorian island of Mayotte.

In concluding my statement, I would like to recall that we have not come before the Assembly today to debate the question of the Comorian island of Mayotte. Our presence here is intended solely to apprise you of the situation prevailing in our country, which is one that demands your understanding, your assistance and your involvement.

We request that the General Assembly once again include the question of the Comorian island of Mayotte on the agenda of its fifty-third session. The past -- which is like a wound tearing the flesh of our people — has in no way dampened our determination to demand and defend our legitimate rights, or our faith that we will prevail.

**The Acting President:** It is my understanding that, after the necessary consultations, consideration of this item may be deferred to the fifth-third session of the General Assembly. May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the provisional agenda of the fifty-third session?

*It was so decided.*

**Agenda item 16** (*continued*)

**Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections**

**(b) Election of seven members of the Committee for Programme and Coordination**

**Note by the Secretary-General (A/52/440/Add.1)**

**The Acting President:** In accordance with General Assembly decision 42/450 of 17 December 1987, the Assembly elects the members of the Committee for Programme and Coordination upon their nomination by the Economic and Social Council.

Members will recall that at its 35th plenary meeting, on 22 October 1997, the General Assembly elected seven members to the Committee for three-year terms of office beginning on 1 January 1998, and that there remained two vacancies from among the Western European and other States for terms of office beginning on the date of election and expiring on 31 December 1999, to be acted on upon the nomination of the Economic and Social Council of two States from among the Western European and other States.

In this connection, the Assembly now has before it document A/52/440/Add.1, containing the nomination by the Economic and Social Council to fill one of the two remaining vacancies in the Committee from among the Western European and other States.

I should like to remind members that, as of 1 January 1998, the following States from among the Western European and other States will still be members or will have become members of the Committee: Austria, France, Germany, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America. Therefore, those five States are not eligible in this election.

As indicated in document A/52/440/Add.1, the Economic and Social Council has nominated Italy to fill one of the two remaining vacancies from among the Western European and other States.

In accordance with rule 92 of the rules of procedure, all elections should be held by secret ballot. However, in accordance with paragraph 16 of decision 34/401, the Assembly may, in elections to subsidiary organs, dispense with secret balloting when the number

of candidates is equal to or does not exceed the number of seats to be filled.

May I therefore take it that the Assembly wishes to declare Italy elected a member of the Committee for Programme and Coordination for a term of office beginning on 18 December 1997 and expiring on 31 December 1999?

*It was so decided.*

**The Acting President:** I congratulate Italy, which has been elected a member of the Committee for Programme and Coordination.

Regarding the remaining vacancy from among the Western European and other States, the General Assembly will be in a position to act on it upon the nomination by the Economic and Social Council of a State from that group. I therefore propose that the Assembly keep this sub-item on the agenda of the fifty-second session.

May I take it that the Assembly agrees to that procedure?

*It was so decided.*

**The Acting President:** We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of sub-item (*b*) of agenda item 16.

**Agenda item 44** (*continued*)

**The situation of democracy and human rights in Haiti**

**Report of the Secretary-General (A/52/687)**

**Draft resolution (A/52/L.65)**

**Report of the Fifth Committee (A/52/737)**

**The Acting President:** Members will recall that at its 72nd meeting, held on 15 December 1997, the General Assembly concluded its debate on this item.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/52/L.65. The report of the Fifth Committee on the programme budget implications of the draft resolution is contained in document A/52/737.

The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt draft resolution A/52/L.65?

*Draft resolution A/52/L.65 was adopted* (resolution 52/174).

**The Acting President:** We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 44.

**Agenda item 45** (*continued*)

**The situation in Central America: procedures for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace and progress in fashioning a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development**

**Reports of the Secretary-General (A/52/344, A/52/554)**

**Note by the Secretary-General (A/52/330)**

**Letter by the Secretary-General (A/52/731)**

**Draft resolutions (A/52/L.19/Rev.1, A/52/L.31)**

**Reports of the Fifth Committee (A/52/725, A/52/736)**

**The Acting President:** Members will recall that at its 66th meeting, held on 8 December 1997, the General Assembly concluded its debate on this item.

May I take it that the General Assembly takes note of the letter by the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly and circulated in document A/52/731?

*It was so decided.*

**The Acting President:** We shall now proceed to consider draft resolutions A/52/L.19/Rev.1 and A/52/L.31. The reports of the Fifth Committee on the programme budget implications of those draft resolutions are contained in documents A/52/725 and A/52/736 respectively.

The General Assembly will first take a decision on draft resolution A/52/L.19/Rev.1, entitled "United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala". I should like to announce that, since the introduction of draft resolution A/52/L.19/Rev.1, the following countries have

become sponsors of the draft resolution: Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Denmark, Ecuador, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Jamaica, Japan, Singapore and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt draft resolution A/52/L.19/Rev.1?

*Draft resolution A/52/L.19/Rev.1 was adopted* (resolution 52/175).

**The Acting President:** The Assembly will now take up draft resolution A/52/L.31, entitled "The situation in Central America: procedures for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace and progress in fashioning a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development".

I should like to announce that since the introduction of this draft resolution, the following countries have become sponsors: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Peru, Portugal, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/52/L.31?

*Draft resolution A/52/L.31 was adopted* (resolution 52/176).

**The Acting President:** The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 45.

**Reports of the Fifth Committee**

**The Acting President:** The General Assembly will now consider the reports of the Fifth Committee on sub-item (*e*) of agenda item 17, agenda item 138 and sub-item (*a*) of agenda item 142.

If there is no proposal under rule 66 of the rules of procedure, I shall take it that the General Assembly decides not to discuss the reports of the Fifth Committee which are before the Assembly today.

*It was so decided.*

**The Acting President:** Before we begin to take action on the recommendations contained in the reports of the Fifth Committee, I should like to advise representatives that we are going to proceed to take decisions in the same manner as was done in the Fifth Committee.

**Agenda item 17** *(continued)*

**Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments**

**(e) Appointment of members of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal**

**Report of the Fifth Committee (A/52/674/Rev.1)**

**The Acting President:** The Assembly will now invite members to turn to the report of the Fifth Committee dealing with the appointment of members of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal under sub-item (*e*) of agenda item 17 (A/52/674/Rev.1).

In paragraph 6 of that report, the Fifth Committee recommends that the General Assembly should appoint the following persons as members of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 January 1998: Mr. Chittharanjan Felix Amerasinghe, Mr. Victor Yenyi Olungu and Mr. Hubert Thierry.

May I consider that the Assembly appoints these persons?

*It was so decided.*

**The Acting President:** May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (*e*) of agenda item 17?

*It was so decided.*

**Agenda item 138**

**Financing of the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

**Report of the Fifth Committee (A/52/690)**

**The Acting President:** The Assembly will now consider the report of the Fifth Committee on agenda item 138, entitled "Financing of the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina" (A/52/690).

The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft decision recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report.

The Fifth Committee adopted the draft decision without a vote. May I consider that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

*The draft decision was adopted.*

**The Acting President:** We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 138.

**Agenda item 142** *(continued)*

**Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations**

**(a) Financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations**

**Report of the Fifth Committee (A/52/453/Add.1)**

The Assembly will now consider Part II of the report of the Fifth Committee on sub-item (*a*) of agenda item 142, entitled "Financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations" (A/52/453/Add.1).

The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of Part II of its report.

The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution, entitled "Death and disability benefits", without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

*The draft resolution was adopted* (resolution 52/177).

**The Acting President:** We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of sub-item (*a*) of agenda item 142.

**Agenda item 3** *(continued)*

**Credentials of representatives to the fifty-second session of the General Assembly**

**(b) Report of the Credentials Committee (A/52/719)**

**The Acting President:** The General Assembly will now consider the report of the Credentials Committee under sub-item (*b*) of agenda item 3, entitled "Credentials of representatives to the fifty-second session of the General Assembly". The report is contained in document A/52/719.

The draft resolution recommended by the Credentials Committee in paragraph 13 of its report reads as follows:

"*The General Assembly*,

"*Having considered* the report of the Credentials Committee and the recommendation contained therein,

"*Approves* the report of the Credentials Committee."

In connection with the consideration of this item, I would like to give the floor to the representative of the United Arab Emirates.

**Mr. Samhan Al-Nuaimi** (United Arab Emirates) (*interpretation from Arabic*): At the outset, allow me, Sir, in my capacity as Chairman of the Arab Group for this month, to express our thanks to the Chairman and members of the Credentials Committee for the report submitted to the Assembly at its current session.

The report of the Credentials Committee, like any other report or document issued by United Nations committees, must clearly comply with the principles of international legality, rules of international law, provisions of the United Nations Charter and resolutions adopted by the Security Council and the General Assembly.

The Security Council has adopted some 25 resolutions in which it reaffirmed, *inter alia*, a number of important principles regarding the Arab territories occupied by force by Israel in June 1967, including Jerusalem. Those principles stressed, first and foremost, that the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 applied to all of the latter occupied territories.

Certain Security Council resolutions have also affirmed in specific terms the inadmissibility and illegality of any measure taken by Israel with a view to changing the legal status or demographic composition of the city of Jerusalem. On the other hand, the General Assembly has adopted, at its regular and special sessions, most recently at the tenth emergency special session, a number of resolutions that stressed that the legal status of

the occupied Arab territories is subject to the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. Accordingly, the participation by Israel in the proceedings of the General Assembly must be based on demonstrating respect for the rules of procedure of the Security Council and the General Assembly and the resolutions and decisions adopted by those two bodies, as well as the rules of international law. Furthermore, that participation should not constitute any violation of those resolutions or rules of procedure. Given that background, it must be understood that the credentials submitted by the delegation of Israel have no relation whatsoever to the Arab territories occupied by Israel by force in 1967.

As we have decided not to take specific action regarding this matter at the current session, despite our conviction that Israel, through the policies pursued by its current Government, does not respect the rules of international law, the Charter of the United Nations or the resolutions of the Security Council and is not working towards achieving a just and comprehensive peace in the region of the Middle East, we hope that this will be used as an opportunity to intensify the efforts under way in order to revive the peace process and put it back on the right track.

**The Acting President:** We shall now proceed to consider the draft resolution recommended by the Credentials Committee in paragraph 13 of its report.

Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote before the voting, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

**Mr. Samadi** (Iran): My delegation would like to express its reservations regarding those parts of the report of the Credential Committee contained in document A/52/719 relating to the credentials of Israel. In line with the position of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran on the issue, my delegation wishes to disassociate itself from the parts of that report referring to the approval of the credentials of Israel.

**Mr. Kamal** (Pakistan): My delegation would like to comment on the report of the Credentials Committee that has been submitted under agenda item 3 and is contained in document A/52/719 of 11 December 1997. Our comments relate to paragraphs 4 and 5, as well as 9 and 10 of the report. We hope to get answers to our comments and questions in due course.

Before taking up those paragraphs one by one, I would like to remind the Assembly that for the last two years the Credentials Committee has been unable to take a decision on the credentials of the delegation of Afghanistan.

I will now address paragraphs 4 and 5 of the report. In paragraph 4, the Assembly is informed, as detailed in subparagraphs (a) and (b), that two sets of credentials have been received from Cambodia, presenting two delegations to represent that country. Paragraph 5 conveys the decision of the Committee to defer a decision on the credentials of Cambodia on the understanding that:

> "pursuant to the applicable procedures of the Assembly, no one would occupy the seat of that country at the fifty-second session."

In paragraph 9 we are informed of another situation, analogous to the one described in paragraph 4. According to paragraph 9, the Legal Counsel pointed out that two sets of credentials had been received, presenting two delegations to represent Afghanistan at the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. On the pattern of paragraph 4, the Committee then lists in paragraph 9 (a) and (b) the details of the credentials received.

In accordance with the first part of paragraph 5, the first half of paragraph 10 informs us that the Committee, having considered the question of the credentials of Afghanistan, decided to defer a decision on the credentials of representatives of Afghanistan. The second part of paragraphs 5 and 10, while dealing with two similar situations, contain a glaring contradiction in the Committee's conclusions. In paragraph 5, the Committee, pursuant to the applicable procedures of the Assembly, decided that no one would occupy the seat of Cambodia in view of the two sets of credentials enumerated in paragraph 4. In paragraph 10, only five paragraphs later, this understanding has been reversed. The second part of paragraph 10, therefore, stretches the same applicable procedures of the Assembly, to allow the current representatives of Afghanistan to continue to participate in the work of the Assembly.

I would draw the Assembly's attention to the Credentials Committee's earlier reports, submitted under agenda item 3, contained in documents A/51/548 of 23 October 1996 and A/51/548/Add.1 of 13 December 1996.

In paragraph 5 of the first report, of 23 October 1996, the Legal Counsel pointed out that the Secretary-General's memorandum related solely to the Member States that had submitted formal credentials for their representatives in accordance with rule 27 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. He pointed out that formal credentials had been submitted for the representatives of Afghanistan on 15 September 1996 by "Professor Burhan-u-ddin Rabbâni, President of the Islamic State of Afghanistan". He reminded the Committee that at the fiftieth session of the General Assembly, the Committee and the Assembly had accepted the credentials for the representatives of Afghanistan signed by the same authority. It was also pointed out that on 7 October 1996 a representative listed in the credentials of 15 September 1996 spoke in the general debate of the Assembly as "Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan". The Legal Counsel indicated that no challenge was made to the presence of the speaker or to his credentials. He thus concluded that no challenge was made to the credentials of Afghanistan within the terms of rule 29 of the rules of procedure.

We were told in paragraph 7 of the same report of 23 October 1996 that the Secretariat had received two communications, on 3 and 10 October 1996, respectively, from the "Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kabul, Afghanistan". These two communications stated, *inter alia*, that the statements, actions and views of the delegations whose credentials were issued by President Rabbani were not authoritative and legally valid and that the said delegation was not the legitimate representative of the State of Afghanistan and must not to be given the opportunity to speak in sessions of the General Assembly. The second communication made it clear that the delegation of the previous regime was not acceptable to the new ruling Government of Taliban. The Government in Kabul added that the Afghanistan seat must be reserved for the representative of the new ruling Government of Afghanistan.

One of those communications was received before 7 October 1996, when, as noted by the Legal Counsel, the representative of the previous regime spoke in the Assembly. We therefore do not understand the Legal Counsel's contention that there was no challenge made to the credentials of the speaker representing the ousted Government of Afghanistan.

The Legal Counsel had concluded from those two communications, and also on the basis of his own conclusion, that no challenge had been made to the credentials of the representative of the previous regime, that neither communication contained a list of purported new representatives of Afghanistan nor did either constitute provisional or formal credentials of representatives. The Legal Counsel relied on linguistic ability or ambiguity to make that inference.

Coming back to this year's report of the Credentials Committee, we know from paragraph 9 that in 1997 the Legal Counsel had a different and clearer legal situation to face. In the past year, the popular, widely supported Government of the Islamic State of Afghanistan duly met the technical and linguistic objections of the Legal Counsel. They submitted the credentials of the genuine representatives duly signed by Alhaj Mullah Muhammed Rabbani, "Head of the Government of the Islamic State of Afghanistan". We note with satisfaction that this year the Legal Counsel did not find the credentials of the legitimate Government of Afghanistan lacking in either form or intent.

The report, then, makes it clear that the Committee is a technical body. If the technical requirements were met, the Legal Counsel should have amended his opinion accordingly.

That is where the contradiction reflected in paragraphs 5 and 10 of this year's report becomes even more difficult to understand. How have the same applicable procedures, led the Committee to reach two diametrically opposed decisions in paragraphs 5 and 10? Rule 29 applies in both cases and should apply equitably, across the board.

Finally, we regret the use of the term "the current representative of Afghanistan accredited to the United Nations". The credentials of a non-representative, ousted and non-existent Government have been challenged by the legally constituted Government of Afghanistan. The Government in Kabul is in control of more than two thirds of the territory of the Islamic State of Afghanistan, and this fact is known to the Legal Counsel as it has been duly acknowledged by the United Nations. The Secretary-General's report in A/51/682, of 14 November 1997, is clear on the subject. The Legal Counsel might also benefit from the Secretary-General's report, which recognizes the existence of the Government in Kabul de facto. The report also highlights the fact that the Governments of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates recognized the legitimate Government of Afghanistan in May 1997.

The Secretary-General's report also brings out beyond doubt that if the Kabul authorities are not the Government, there is also no other Government in Afghanistan. Paragraph 36 states that responsible local political authorities, let alone a central Government, have virtually ceased to exist. The Secretary-General defines Afghanistan as a classic situation in failed States.

We will not comment on these observations. We recognize the Government in Kabul. We appreciate the position and the initiatives taken by the Government in Kabul, such as the exchange of prisoners with other factions. Mr. Pino Arlacchi, the head of the United Nations Drug Control Programme, quite recently witnessed some other positive developments of interest to the entire international community.

Several paragraphs in the Secretary-General's report, taken at face value, would totally discredit the ousted faction, as it has failed to carry out its obligations under Article 4 of the Charter. It cannot fulfil any obligation whatsoever. The Legal Counsel would agree that they do not in any way satisfy the criteria for continuing to occupy the Afghanistan seat in the Organization. I would painfully refer the Assembly again to the briefing by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on 16 December concerning the massive massacres of prisoners that took place in the areas where these factions have influence and which are outside the control of the Kabul Government.

For the information of the Legal Counsel and the Credentials Committee, there is another sad reminder that the present so-called representatives represent nothing that possesses any attributes of a State or Government. The Secretary-General's report makes it clear that, in the terms of paragraph 5 of Article 2 of the Charter, they are totally and absolutely, factually as well as theoretically, not in any position to give the United Nations "every assistance in any action that it takes" in accordance with the Charter.

We have been informed of the Secretary General's visit to Tehran to attend the summit of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) from 9 to 11 December this year. The Secretary-General had hoped that the OIC and its members would use that opportunity to adopt unanimously a strong decision in favour of peace in Afghanistan. The Secretary-General, in his next report, will certainly inform Member States that the OIC adopted, unanimously, a resolution on the situation in Afghanistan.

**The Acting President:** I am sorry to have to interrupt the representative of Pakistan, but the ten minutes for his intervention is up. May therefore ask him to be kind enough to conclude his statement.

**Mr. Kamal** (Pakistan): Thank you; I will conclude. Like several matters, the submission of credentials is an internal matter for the people and Government of Afghanistan. We cannot but seriously regret that the Credentials Committee has been partial, inequitable and unjust in its consideration of the credentials of the legitimate Government of Afghanistan. We hope that the Organization will be able to follow the OIC practice of keeping the seat of Afghanistan vacant, and we reiterate our hope that answers will be provided to our comments and questions in due course.

**The Acting President:** We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote before the vote.

We shall now take action on the recommendation of the Credentials Committee set forth in paragraph 13 of its report (A/52/719).

The Credentials Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

*The draft resolution was adopted* (resolution 52/178).

**The Acting President:** I call on the representative of Afghanistan, who wishes to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind members that, in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to 5 minutes for the second and should be made by delegations from their seats.

**Mr. Bazel** (Afghanistan): The Islamic State of Afghanistan, presided over by Professor Burhan-u-ddin Rabbâni, is the only holder of national sovereignty in Afghanistan. It represents and personifies the continuity of Afghanistan as a State. The internal disturbances, tensions and civil war cannot be considered the cause for extinction of the political entity of a State.

In the situation actually prevailing in Afghanistan, the existence of foreign military personnel and the mercenary nature of the Taliban are well known to the international community.

Last year, Pakistan preached for the transfer of Afghanistan's seat to their stooge installed in Kabul. This year, due to the considerable amount of information in the international media and in the reports of the Secretary-General on the physical presence of Pakistani military personnel in Afghanistan, Pakistan is not legally and morally in a position to chant the same song.

The vacant-seat formula presented here is another attempt by Pakistan to fragment Afghanistan and to use the United Nations to achieve their hegemonistic scheme in the region.

The Islamic State of Afghanistan is firmly convinced that the affirmation or adoption of such a formula would create a dangerous precedent and would encourage hegemonistic countries to invade and send mercenaries to occupy part of another country and then try to legitimize its aggression.

I should also like to mention that the representative of Pakistan referred to the briefing by an officer of the High Commissioner, Mr. John Mills, on 16 December, but he omitted the first part of the briefing, which stated:

> "The first was in a number of villages near Mazar-i-Sharif where advancing Taliban forces in September had massacred civilians of the Hazara tribe. In one village 53 people had been killed when Taliban entered the village demanding weapons and shooting civilians whether or not weapons were provided. In the second village 30 elderly people who had stayed behind when others fled the Taliban advance were killed. The Special Representative was told that similar killings had occurred in two other villages."

**Mr. Kamal** (Pakistan): It is not my intention to enter into a debate with people who do not control even 20 per cent of the territory of Afghanistan and even with that 20 per cent, are in no position either to fulfil the criteria of statehood or to prevent the type of massacres to which the High Commissioner for Human Rights has made reference in the most horrendous terms that we have seen since the sad events of the Second World War. I would merely like to repeat that the vacant-seat formula to which my delegation has referred is a formula accepted by 55 member States of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. They feel that this group of gentlemen does not fulfil the criteria for statecraft, which is why the Islamic Conference has adopted the vacant-seat formula which has been in place for more than a year. We urge the United Nations to consider that, because people who cannot fulfil the criteria of statehood do not have the right to continue to sit in this Organization.

The other point that I made — and I am not entering into a debate with people whose legitimacy or ability to fulfil the functions of statecraft we do not recognize — is that the Credentials Committee has taken two decisions that are not in conformity with each other. We look forward, at some stage, in due course, to an explanation as to how in two totally analogous cases decisions have been taken on the basis of two understandings which are diametrically opposed to each other. That is something which this Assembly needs to consider at some future date so that the legitimacy of the decisions that we take is based on principles, principles that are followed across the board, and not on the basis of double standards or of selectivity.

**The Acting President:** We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of sub-item (*b*) of agenda item 3.

*The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.*